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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 000658

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [OREP](#) [CASC](#) [KOLY](#) [KG](#) [AF](#) [KZ](#) [UZ](#) [CH](#) [TI](#)
TU, GM, PK
SUBJECT: XINJIANG: NEWSPAPER REPORTS ON TERRORIST SHOOTOUT
IN URUMQI; MEDIA, SCHOLARS EMPHASIZE OLYMPIC THREAT

REF: A. OCS/FBIS CPP20080219480001
[1](#)B. OCS/FBIS CPP20080214710001
[1](#)C. BEIJING 581

Classified By: Deputy Political Section Chief Ben Moeling. Reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) The Global Times (Huanqiu Shibao), a newspaper run by the CCP's flagship People's Daily newspaper, reported in two articles, published on February 18 and 20 respectively, that Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) police raided a "violent terrorist cell (tuanhuo)" on the evening of January 27 in Urumqi's "biggest residential development," killing two "terrorists" and arresting fifteen more who have confessed to their crimes (ref A). The article claimed the group had received guidance (zhishi) from foreign terrorist organizations and were conspiring to carry out "acts of violent terrorism." Ministry of Public Security (MPS) officials in Beijing on February 19 confirmed basic details of the raid, but would not give information on possible threats made by this specific group to the Olympic Games. Media quoted Beijing- and Urumqi-based scholars who took the raid as an opportunity to stress the terrorist threat to the upcoming Olympics, with Beijing-based counterterrorism expert Li Wei stating that "East Turkestan" terrorist organizations have "on different occasions openly threatened to use violence and murder (baoli biji shouduan) to interfere with and ruin the Beijing Olympics." End summary.

CCP Media: Police-Terrorists Shootout in Urumqi

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Global Times (Huanqiu Shibao), a newspaper run by the CCP's flagship People's Daily newspaper, reported in two articles, published on February 18 and 20 respectively, that Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) police raided a "violent terrorist cell" on the evening of January 27 in Urumqi's "biggest residential development," killing two "terrorists" and arresting fifteen more (ref A). Although "several" police suffered wounds, none were killed in the "well-conceived," "smooth" operation. Terrorists had rented an apartment in Xinfu Huayuan development (xiaoqu) of Tianshan District, which they were using to "assemble explosives" and "carry out training." Police found at the site a number of guns, home-made (zizhi) explosives, "violent terrorist activity equipment" and religious extremist propaganda. They had received guidance (zhishi) from foreign terrorist organizations and were conspiring to carry out "acts of violent terrorism." The terrorists have already confessed to their crimes. The February 20 article quotes XUAR Party Secretary (and Politburo member) Wang Lequan stating in a "recent" interview with "Hong Kong media" that

"right now, we take out (dadiao) ten to twenty violent terrorist cells (tuanhuo) each year."

Global Times Refutes HK Sing Tao Jih Pao Report

13. (SBU) The February 20 Global Times article also quoted an unnamed Xinjiang official as "resolutely refuting" a February 14 report in Hong Kong's Sing Tao Jih Pao newspaper on a similar incident (ref B). The Sing Tao article reported that eighteen "terrorists" and two police officers were killed during a raid, and claimed that "several hundred" police were involved in surrounding the apartment. The reported location of the raid was the same, but Sing Tao claimed that the raid took place on February 4, just before the "terrorists" could carry out an attack the following day on the eleventh anniversary of the Yining ("Ghulja" in Uighur) incident of 1997 (see note below). The February 20 Global Times report included Sing Tao's report of a planned February 5 attack in Urumqi, but made no mention of the Yining incident. The Global Times article also described the anger of local residents at the fact that the Xinfu Huayuan development police station had allowed a "nest of terror" to set up "right under their (own) eyelids," just 300 meters from the station, adding that one official at the local police station is rumored to have been fired. However, both reports emphasized the continued stability of, and local citizens' confidence in, Xinjiang's overall security situation.

14. (C) NOTE: On February 5, 1997, Chinese security forces brutally suppressed Uighur demonstrations against restrictions on social gatherings of young Muslims in Yining City, Yili Prefecture. PolOffs visiting Yining on the tenth anniversary of the crackdown witnessed a number of

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approximately six-to-eight member security force teams patrolling through the streets at night, armed with tear gas guns. Additionally, one Han taxi driver told PolOffs to be careful because the "Uighurs might riot." End Note.

15. (SBU) The official Xinhua News Agency, the China Daily and other popular online news portals such as Sina.com, Sohu.com and QQ.com all carried news of the incident on February 18, but the story received minimal attention in Xinjiang local online media. While www.xjnews.com and the Urumqi Evening News website carried the Global Times story, as of the afternoon of February 22, Poloff found no reporting of the raid on two major Xinjiang online news sites, www.tianshannet.com and www.xjdaily.com.

MPS Tells LegAtt: "Read the Newspaper"

16. (C) The Ministry of Public Security (MPS) confirmed to the Embassy Beijing Legal Attache on February 19 that the raid took place and that two "terrorists" were killed, fifteen arrested, and no police lost their lives. Pressed for more details, MPS officials simply told LegAtt to "read the newspaper," likely referring to the February 19 Global Times article. MPS made clear that the Sing Tao report of February 14 was "completely inaccurate." PolOff spoke with a XUAR Public Security Bureau Propaganda Department official on February 19 who refused to discuss the raid on the grounds that he did not have MPS approval to do so.

17. (SBU) Asked about the incident at the February 19 regular MFA press briefing, spokesman Liu Jianchao said he had seen reports of the incident and that China's position on terrorism is firm and "in line" with that of the international community (ref C).

Media, Scholars Hype Threat to Olympics

18. (C) Both Global Times articles quoted Li Wei,

counterterrorism expert from the Ministry of State Security-affiliated China Institutes for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), stating, "This incident reminds us that ensuring the security for the Olympics is not just limited to Beijing, and that in some areas where terrorist activities have occurred, attention must be increased." The February 20 article quotes Li Wei more extensively. Li warns that "East Turkestan" terrorist organizations have "on different occasions openly threatened to use violence and murder (baoli biji shouduan) to interfere with and ruin the Beijing Olympics." Li also points out that other organizations and groups might commit violent acts during "the year of the Beijing Olympics."

¶9. (SBU) Despite Li's assertion that foreign terrorist organizations have recently decreased support for violent acts of terrorism within China's borders as a means of garnering "moral and political support from Western countries," he warns that these groups are still actively preparing and training and almost always have foreign links. For these reasons, Li stresses that China's counterterrorism responsibility this year is "formidable," and reminds the masses to prepare themselves to prevent and deal with a variety of "sudden disturbances" (tufa shijian).

¶10. (SBU) The February 20 Global Times article also reports an interview with Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences counterterrorism expert Pan Zhiqiang, who similarly takes the topic of the Urumqi shootout as an opportunity to discuss threats to Olympic security. Pan is quoted saying that the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) must strengthen counterterrorism work. Pan adds that Xinjiang must also continue to carry out counterterrorism efforts on a "great scale" in order to "vigorously purge" the home front of "terrorists."

¶11. (C) MPS officials told LegAtt February 19 that they perceive groups like the one targeted in the recent raid as a threat to the Olympic Games. When LegAtt asked if this specific group had made threats regarding the Olympics, the official gave no information.

XJ Secretary Wang on XJ terrorism

¶12. (SBU) State-controlled news portal Sina.com carried a February 20 China News Online (Zhongguo Xinwen Wang) report, which includes extensive excerpts from a "recent" Phoenix Television interview with XUAR Party Secretary Wang Lequan,

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in which Wang discussed the history of terrorism in Xinjiang, measures taken to combat the problem and even his detailed assessment of United States-based Uighur activist Rebiya Kadeer. (Note: The article does not include a reference to security forces' uncovering ten to twenty terrorist cells per year, as highlighted by the Global Times.)

¶13. (C) Wang describes the Government's account of the Yining incident, which he alleges was organized by the "East Turkestan Liberation Organization" (ETLO, also abbreviated using its Uighur language initials as SHAT), and says there were over 250 cases of "violent acts of terrorism" carried out in Xinjiang by "East Turkestan" forces in the 1990s. The report also quotes Wang telling the journalist that he was the "first name" on an assassination list of the "East Turkestan Islamic Opposition Party" in the late-1990s.
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